

Understanding Fat and Cholesterol

Too much cholesterol in your blood can lead to blocked arteries. This can cause problems such as heart attack and stroke. One of the best ways to manage heart and blood vessel disease is to lower your blood cholesterol. Planning meals that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol helps reduce the level of cholesterol in your blood. Below are eating tips to help lower your blood cholesterol levels.

Eat Less Fat

A healthy goal is to have less than 25% of your daily calories come from fat. Instead of fats, eat more fruits, grains, and vegetables. This also helps control your weight, and can even reduce your risk for some cancers. There are different kinds of fats in foods. Fats can be saturated, unsaturated, or trans fats. The best fats to choose are unsaturated fats. But fats are high in calories, so eat even unsaturated fats sparingly.

Limit Foods High in Saturated Fats

Saturated fats come from animals and certain plants (such as coconut and palm). Eating too much saturated fat can raise your blood cholesterol levels and make your artery problems worse. Your goal is to eat less saturated fat. Below are some examples of foods that contain lots of saturated fat:

- Fatty cuts of meat (lamb, ham, beef)
- Many pastries, cakes, cookies, and candies
- Cream, ice cream, sour cream, cheese, and butter, and foods made with them
- Sauces made with butter or cream
- Salad dressings with saturated fats
- Foods that contain palm or coconut oil

Choose Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature. They are better choices for your heart than saturated fat. There are two types of unsaturated fats: polyunsaturated fat and monounsaturated fat. Aim to replace saturated fats with polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats.

- Polyunsaturated fats are found in corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, and other vegetable oils.
- Monounsaturated fats are found in olive oil, canola oil, and peanut oil. Some margarines and spreads are now made with these oils, too. Of all fats, monounsaturated fats are the least harmful to your heart.

Avoid Trans Fats

Like saturated fats, trans fats have been linked to heart disease. Even a small amount can harm your health. Trans fats are found in liquid oils that have been changed to be solid at room temperature.

Margarine, which is often made from vegetable oil, is one example. Vegetable shortening is another. Trans fats are often found in packaged goods. Check ingredients for the words “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated.” They mean the foods contain trans fat.

Eat Less Cholesterol

Eating foods that contain cholesterol can also raise your blood cholesterol. Try to eat less than 200 mg of cholesterol a day. Food labels will tell you how much cholesterol is in the foods you eat.

Limit Foods High in Cholesterol

You can't see cholesterol. You have to read food labels to check the cholesterol in the foods you eat. Avoid or limit these high-cholesterol foods:

- Liver and other organ meats
- Fatty red meats
- Bacon and sausage
- Egg yolks (egg whites are okay)
- Shrimp

What About Triglycerides?

Triglycerides are a type of fat in your blood. Like cholesterol, high levels of triglycerides can lead to blocked arteries. Too much sugar and certain carbohydrates in your diet can raise triglyceride levels in your blood. Your doctor or nutritionist may advise you to avoid alcohol and to cut down on foods that are high in sugar and fat, especially if you have diabetes.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 140	Calories from Fat 10
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 1g	2%
Saturated Fat .5g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 15mg	5%
Sodium 140mg	5%

Reading Food Labels

Luckily, most foods now have labels giving you the facts about what you're eating. Reading food labels helps you make healthy choices. Look for the words highlighted below.

- **Serving Size** This is the amount of food in 1 serving. If you eat larger portions, be sure to count

more of everything: fat, calories, and cholesterol.

- **Total Fat** Tells you how many grams (g) of fat are in 1 serving.
- **Calories from Fat** This tells you the total number of calories from fat in **1 serving**. Look for foods with the fewest calories from fat.
- **Saturated Fat** Tells you how many grams (g) of saturated fat are in 1 serving.
- **Trans Fat** Tells how many grams (g) of trans fat are in 1 serving.
- **Cholesterol** Tells you how many milligrams (mg) of cholesterol are in 1 serving.